

THE WRONG CHOICE FOR AMERICA:

DEMOCRATS' MASSIVE TAX INCREASES AND MEDICARE CUTS

Democrats' Plan to Slash Medicare Advantage Would Hurt Minorities Most Ways and Means Democrat, CBC Member Expressed Doubts At Hearing NAACP, LULAC Oppose Cuts

The innovative, flexible health coverage options offered by the Medicare Advantage (MA) program have proven particularly popular among African American and Hispanic beneficiaries, so cuts that – in effect – eliminate the MA program would disproportionately hurt those communities. According to calculations based on the research of Dr. Kenneth Thorpe, a former Clinton Administration official and researcher at Emory University, the MA cuts proposed by House Democrats would eliminate MA coverage for 800,000 minorities.

That is why the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the nation's oldest and most respected civil rights organization, and the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), the largest advocacy group for Latinos in the United States, are opposed to cutting the MA program. It is also why at least one Ways and Means Democrat has publicly questioned the wisdom of cuts to MA.

At a hearing on March 21, 2007, Rep. Stephanie Tubbs Jones, a Member of the Ways and Means Committee and the Congressional Black Caucus, expressed strong reservations about the effect of MA cuts in minority communities:

"If you take out Medicare Advantage programs, or you address or deal with the funding problem, you are targeting a group of folks with who have nowhere else to go," she said. ... "Experience says to you that if you close down the Medicare Advantage programs, there is a population of people who are without health care coverage and they are a population of people who have chronic health care problems and they are not covered by other health care plans. ... Before we go down the road of changing what we have right now, let us make sure we aren't changing it on the backs of low-income and minority people who already receive disparate health service and access to health care."

From the NAACP letter:

"MA plans – private health plan options that provide coverage to 8.3 million Medicare beneficiaries – disproportionately provide coverage to low-income and racial and ethnic minority beneficiaries. Specifically, 40 percent of African Americans without Medicaid or employer coverage rely on comprehensive health insurance coverage provided by MA plans. By providing more comprehensive benefits and lower cost-sharing than traditional Medicare, MA plans help racial and ethnic minority populations gain access to health care services that are critical to their long-term health and well-being."

"Reduced funding for the MA program would have a negative impact on the health and health care of millions of Medicare beneficiaries – particularly for low-income and minority beneficiaries."

"We urge you not to backtrack on these priorities by cutting funding for the MA program. This program is vitally important to the health and well-being of racial and ethnic minorities who rely on MA to provide them with the comprehensive, affordable, and coordinated care they need."

From the LULAC letter:

"Ensuring access to high quality, affordable health care is one of our top priorities, and one that is especially critical in the Hispanic community. We firmly believe Medicare Advantage is helping meet this challenge for Hispanic seniors."